



WACD Issue Committee Activity

Alternative Energy – The committee co-chairs are Read Smith, Palouse CD, and Jim Armstrong, Spokane CD.

CREP Committee – The Committee has been working on future visions for CREP and decided that a reauthorization with subtle changes is more attainable than a new program. The Committee is looking at the program to include practices for water quality benefits not just fish habitat. The allocation formula currently used by the Commission for technical assistance funding has also been discussed by the CREP Committee. The committee has been working with other agencies, specifically FSA and Rod Hamilton, and groups throughout the state. The Committee has scheduled a meeting in Ellensburg on May 31st. Co-chairs are Bob Barker, Whatcom CD, and Carolyn Kelly, Skagit CD.

District Operations – The committee has been working to assist the Commission in reviewing policy and procedure for elected and appointment supervisors, creating a guideline for districts looking into implementing special assessments, and reviewing wording and guidelines for RCW 89.08. The Committee has also developed a list of potential projects and issues for the upcoming biennium. Co-chairs of the Committee are Sherry Penney, Underwood CD, and Vicki Carter, Spokane CD.

Farm Bill Policy – The Committee has developed a white paper on the priorities for Conservation Districts in Washington for the upcoming 2007 USDA Farm Bill. Committee members assisted WACD in providing information to the American Farmland Trust at the Farm Bill Forum in Moses Lake on April 20th. Co-chairs of the Committee are Jerry Scheele, Spokane CD, and Megan Stewart, Asotin CD.

Forestry Committee – The Committee is working on developing a direction for the Forestry Committee. The Forestry Committee is also working on a track for the WADE meeting. Co-chairs of the Committee are Albert Roberts, Okanogan CD, and Bob Amrine, Lewis CD.

Irrigation – The Committee is looking into what relationships and opportunities the Columbia River bill, passed by the Legislature in 2006, may hold for districts. The Committee is developing and collecting background information for the potential projects that may come from this legislation. Co-chairs are Dale Wentworth, Grant CD, and Britt Dudek, Foster Creek CD.

Livestock – The Committee is working hard to gather background information on the needs of districts statewide for livestock operations. The Committee is developing a request to districts for information that will be used as the justification for how much technical assistance and cost share funding will be needed in the 2007-2009 biennium to address the livestock issue. They have also been working with WACD and the Commission to develop a mechanism to allocate the funds left over from Phase 2. A consistent planning format for farm plans has also been discussed with the committee bringing a draft proposal to WADE. The co-chairs of the Committee are Mark Kallstrom, Grant CD, and John Schuh, Skagit CD.

Urban, Community and Coastal Resources – The Committee has been following up on resolutions from the annual meeting including the Office of Farmland Preservation. Committee has received a lot of support from staff and supervisors to develop a small acreage program for districts statewide. The program will be aimed at acreages smaller than 40 acres and without a commercial production goal. The co-chairs of the Committee are Dean Longrie, Clark CD, and Bobbi Lindemulder, Snohomish CD.

Puget Sound Task Force – The Task Force is developing a brochure that shows the kinds of projects/programs that districts already have in place to assist the Governor's Puget Sound Initiative. Districts are participating with their local stakeholders to offer assistance and help the Puget Sound

Partnership (Governor appointed group) to see districts roles. Co-chairs of the Committee are Scott Wallace, King CD, and Monty Mahan, Pierce CD.



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

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Office of Farmland Preservation

Background

In 2002, the Washington State Legislature passed legislation amending RCW 89.08 to establish an agricultural conservation easement program and account in the Washington Conservation Commission. Unfortunately, this agricultural conservation easement program was never funded.

In November 2005, the Washington Association of Conservation Districts passed two resolutions related to farmland preservation at its annual convention: one to encourage the fulfillment of the legislation passed in 2002, and one to recommend the establishment of an Office of Farmland Preservation to fulfill that legislation.

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed Office of Farmland Preservation is multi-fold:

1. Staff and support a "Washington Farmland Preservation Task Force"
2. Develop guidelines for "model" local PDR programs and agricultural easements
3. Develop grant process for development of PDR programs and for purchase of development rights on agricultural lands
4. Provide technical support to communities as they develop PDR programs
5. Provide financial support, through planning grants, to communities developing PDR programs
6. Provide on-going technical assistance to communities as PDR programs are developed and launched
7. Provide oversight and management of grants

The Office of Farmland Preservation should be coordinated with other initiatives that find their primary audience and constituency in the natural resource industry sector. The Office of Farmland Preservation should therefore be established within the Washington State Conservation Commission, which works with local Conservation Districts and administers grant programs related to irrigation, dairy management, and farm planning, among others.

Benefits of farmland preservation to the landowner and community

First and foremost, the farmer, by selling his development rights, gets that equity "up out of the dirt." For a farmer committed to agriculture and the future of agriculture, selling development rights is a sensible business decision: he can reinvest the money in his business, fund his retirement account, and/or equitably arrange his estate by leaving his farm to one heir and the money from the development right sale to his other heirs.

The farmer also leaves a lasting legacy to his community. His neighbors can breathe easier knowing potential legal liabilities and right-to-farm complaints are reduced when the likelihood of non-ag rural residents is eliminated. With enough protected lands, the community is guaranteed a stable industry that will continue contributing to the health of the local economy. Regionally, the land base is stabilized for future generations of farmers, and processors and other agricultural support industries can safely invest and grow, knowing the farmers are likely to be there for years to come.

Office of Farmland Preservation

Preliminary Timeline 01/06

2006

- Discuss concept of Office of Farmland Preservation during session
- Gather sponsors for 2007 bill
- Develop preliminary budget for 2007-2008 biennium, get input from OFM
- Work with caucus staff to draft bill
- Prepare bills for introduction in both houses

2007/2008

- Legislature establishes and funds initial work of Office of Farmland Preservation
- Hire manager/administrator of Office of Farmland Preservation
- Convene Washington Farmland Preservation Task Force
- Develop guidelines for model local purchase of development rights (PDR) programs
- Develop guidelines for fund disbursement (for both local PDR programs and local program planning)
- Washington State Conservation Commission approves Washington Farmland Preservation Task Force recommendations re: model program and fund disbursements
- Staff develops a request for proposals (RFP) from counties for block grants to plan PDR programs for farmland preservation
- Staff identifies, based on RFP responses, counties interested in PDR planning grants
- Commence granting to counties for program planning and development
- Provide technical assistance and support to counties as they develop farmland preservation programs

2009

- Continue grants and technical support for PDR planning
- Fulfill legislative intent of RCW 89.08.530 and 89.08.540 by funding agricultural conservation easements program and account (must identify, through task force and interest demonstrated by counties, the need for resources)
- Continue Washington Farmland Preservation Task Force to make recommendations to Washington State Conservation Commission re: disbursement of funds to local PDR programs
- Begin disbursing block grants to local PDR programs



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***“Honoring our
past, sustaining
our future,
where Skagit
farms are the
pride of the
community.”***

Overview of Purchase of Development Rights

How does Purchase of Development Rights work?

“In America, a landowner essentially owns a bundle of rights that go with the land. These rights include water rights, air rights, the right to sell the land, the right to pass it along to heirs, the right to use the land, and the right to develop it. Any of these rights can be separated off from the bundle and sold, donated, or otherwise encumbered.”¹

In a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, a landowner ***voluntarily*** sells the development rights to a qualified entity (such as a local government) and receives compensation in return for the placement of certain restrictions on his land. After selling the development rights, the farmer retains ownership of the land, and can farm it, sell it, pass it on to heirs, and fulfill all other retained rights.

The landowner is usually paid the difference between speculative value and farm value for the development rights. For instance, if the speculative value of the property is \$500,000, and the farm value is \$325,000, the farmer will be paid \$175,000 – the value of the development potential on that property. Typical factors in the valuation of the development rights include, but are not limited to, proximity to urban infrastructure, viability of the agricultural sector (and subject property) in the region or locality, and soil quality or productive capacity.

To insure the value for the buyer of those development rights (usually a government agency), an easement is placed on the property. This easement runs with the land, protecting the property from residential development and for agricultural production. Public access is not allowed, though the easement holder has the right to “monitor” the property annually to make sure that it is in compliance with the contract signed by the easement grantor. This visit also serves as an opportunity to build a relationship with the landowner and learn about the farming operation.

What are the benefits to a landowner?

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¹ Daniels, Tom. [The Purchase of Development Rights, Agricultural Preservation, and Other Land Use Policy Tools – The Pennsylvania Experience](#). (SUNY-Albany)

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Some things to consider:

- ◆ Farmland preservation should exist as a component of a coordinated and comprehensive approach to conservation on both the County and State levels.
- ◆ Resources should be allocated to farmland preservation programs to adequately staff, effectively administer, and continually assess and improve program elements to adapt to industry trends and landowner needs.
- ◆ Local participation in a PDR program is vital to insure best use of available funds.
- ◆ Farmland preservation in and of itself is not enough to secure the agricultural industry. A comprehensive approach to farmland preservation and farm profitability is key to the future of the industry.

About the proposed Office of Farmland Preservation

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